

THE QUIVER

Saturday, August 1, 1858.



(Drawn by A. B. HOUGHTON.)

"Poor Austin fairly cried."—p. 724.

AN HOUR'S REVENGE, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

A TRUE STORY WITH MANY MORALS. IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

SO I rode away in passion and scorn from the presence of that suppliant old man, unmoved, or scarcely moved, by his last appealing words.

VOL. III.

Down into the dark woods, that rustled and hissed as if an evil spirit were mocking me among the leaves, or flung their dense shadows across the road, as if to sympathise with my

gloomy heart. Out into the open fields, so flat, so dreary-looking in the glimmering light, and under the struggling stars that were so often eclipsed by the stealthy, creeping clouds. The barking of a farmer's dog, the screech of an owl, was enough to make my heart leap. I was galloping madly homeward, and yet had no wish to get there. Home! There was no such place; there was a den where a wounded wild beast might hide himself and die, or else lash his anger up to some ferocious deed; but *that* is not home, as people used to employ the word. Why should I hurry back into my lair? Who was waiting there for me with a wife's embrace or a daughter's welcome? None, and none ever should. And I understood now what I so long suspected, that it was all done by the selfish treachery and foul fraud of my schoolfellow and only confidant. I tell you that I cursed him—I cursed him before God, with clenched hands and a parched tongue; and my evil prayer came back upon my own head, but not until he too felt its malignant power. Now I know that a malediction is a fearful thing, and withers no victim with a blight so deadly as falls upon its own author's heart. But I would not have believed it then, nor would I have paused if I did. That night the bad passions indulged so long had their own wild way, and wrought their unholy will without restraint. My horse rushed at his frantic pace up a little eminence, and unconsciously I drew bridle, and paused to gaze. For one mile to the left, on the opposite hill from where I was, the farmhouse of the newly-married couple peeped out through the intervening woods. There, in ease and gladness, with his happy and confiding bride, was the villain who had spoiled my life, and here was I—lonely, desperate, unpitied. The burst of moonlight in which it gleamed so fairly, was a type of the bad man's life; the dense shadow that brooded over me was a fit emblem of his victim's. Something should be done—some blow struck—some deadly vengeance wreaked; but what it should be I knew not. But it was not likely that the devil would leave so tempting a tool without employment, and I suppose he sent the chance straggler who came up to me. At all events, a strange man hailed me from the roadside, and said he was tramping homeward, and wanted to be there by noon to-morrow, thirty miles away. His lantern was out, and the road was strange to him, and he begged me to give him a light, if I happened to have a tinder-box. Poor fellow, he never accosted any one less disposed to be accommodating.

"A light!" I thundered back; "no, surely, that would be a likely thing. Whose ricks do you mean to burn, scoundrel, asking help of an honest man?"

He turned away sullenly enough; but my angry

words were a revelation to myself. For now, instead of poor old Day's lamenting cry, "Oh, William! William! William!" that taunt of my own rang incessantly in my ears, in all manner of times and tones, now whispered softly and slowly, now shouted with such a clamour as if a legion of fiends were behind me on the horse—"whose ricks do you mean to burn?"

Slowly, slowly the horse went onward now, for I was thinking. One thing was clear, that if I were caught I should be hanged; another was, that every blow I struck at my foe would fall as heavily upon Alice. Fool! Was I not then to strike at all? or could I not take an exquisite revenge by telling her everything her lord had done, and then giving them charity, if they came down so low as to need bread. Low they should fall, or else my influence in the county was far less than I supposed. And I was glad that I had not moved against them until now, for all my weight should come upon them at once, in the hour when they could least bear up against it. My purpose never wavered from the time it was conceived. "Whose ricks do you mean to burn?" said the voice in my ear again; and I seemed to answer it like a stranger, "Why, Austin's ricks, of course; whose else? Did he not beat me in the school and the meadows; slander me to the old man who loved me; steal away my love by lies?"

It was all over in ten minutes. At the end of his private road I leaped the horse over a fence and tied him to a tree, and then crept along so cautiously that the dogs never growled, till I found a gap in the half-mended fences that let me into the homestead. Then I sat down, with the bludgeon across my knees which I always carried at night, ready, and quite resolved, to stun with one blow whatever mortal interfered with me. My hands were as firm as ever, but deadly cold; yet my brain boiled, and the beating of my heart was felt up to my very temples, making it impossible to think, if any more thought had been required. But it was all quite easy. I crouched up against a haystack, with my face toward it, and kept off the soft breeze by my back. I kindled a light with steel and flint, blew it up in the tinder-box, and lit a handful of straws. How fast it spread! I sprang back aghast when the glare lit up my face, and then flung the fiery tinder-box into the hay, and ran for life. Mounting my horse, I ventured to look back, and saw the ring of fire glowing bright and clear upon the rick-side, and looked no more for a quarter of an hour—that seemed like a lifetime. How fast we flew over the ground! Hist! the breeze is rising; that will help my work more than twenty men can hinder it. Hist again! the church bells are ringing—the alarm is given already, just as I am safe at my own door. The housekeeper started at

the ghastly paleness of my face, and asked if I were ill.

"No; but Mr. Austin's house is on fire. Turn out every man in the place, to show that I bear him no ill-will at such a time. I wish I would be welcome myself."

So they turned out, and worked well; and I, from an upper window, watched the flames raging furiously for hours. At seven in the morning they came back to tell us that a strolling rascal had set fire to the hayrick, and it spread to the roofs of the outhouses; from that it caught the thatched dwelling-house, and burned it down to the ground. The cattle were destroyed as well as the harvest. Mrs. Austin was lying at the rector's house in hysterics, and her husband was going about crying out like a madman that they were ruined, beggared, without a roof to cover them or a bed to lie in.

"And, sir," said one, "I heard him say that he deserved it richly; but the punishment ought not to have come upon his poor wife."

"And aren't you glad, sir," said another, "that the villain who did it has been caught?"

"Caught!" shrieked I; "tell me how, when; what's the proof?"

"Proof enough," said half a dozen voices at once; "he was found hiding behind a hedge, with a lamp in his hand, and the flame quenched, to pass unseen. And when he was taken, he trembled so that he could hardly speak, but muttered out something about his fear of being accused. What business had an honest man thinking of that?"

My eyes were opened in one instant, and I knew what a crime I had committed. My beautiful, lost love cruelly struck down to the ground in the hour of her crowning happiness; the support of a family snatched away: God's right of judgment usurped by my presumption; a new crime imported into this peaceful neighbourhood; and an innocent man drawn into deadly peril. All these things crowded upon my mind at once. I crept away from the noisy crew, and fell upon my knees and wept. The over-wrought system gave way in the revulsion of feeling, and I vowed to save the accused man, and to recompense the Austins, even at the cost of a confession, and of my whole fortune.

My remorse was deepened when I heard that old Day had a relapse that night, and could scarcely move, much less speak. Conscience told me that the cause was my violence, though every one else set it down to agitation, caused by the alarm of fire on his daughter's premises. In any case, the fault was mine.

Next day a new and terrible dread seized me. Two men of bad character, that I had turned away, and whom Austin had foolishly employed,

came up to me very impudently in the fields, and demanded a hundred pounds a-piece!

"We saw you, master; jump your horse over the hedge, and then we thought something strange was going on. So we followed you through the gap, and watched, and the light showed us who you were. And you'd better pay down the money, and be done with it."

Oh, how sick my heart was! But they would have been very keen to see it, as I turned around and threatened them with the police, if ever they dared repeat the trumpery lie, that no person would believe if it were true.

"Remember, villains, the peace-officers found two men's footprints close to the spot. Suppose your tale were not believed, and they happened to fit your shoes? But I don't choose to denounce either of you; so be gone, and never look at me again. If I find you in the county, I shall give you up."

This was plainly a new idea to them both; and they drew off and took earnest counsel for a minute; then one of them came back, opened his hand, and, with a stupid, triumphant grin, held out my tinder-box! And I remembered that my name was scraped upon the lid.

"Show me that," said I. And he handed it to me to examine.

Everything, as I knew well, depended upon that minute. So, never hesitating what to do, I looked him sternly in the face, put the box in my pocket, shouted to the bewildered pair to mind what I had said, and was among my workmen in an instant. The next moment I had fainted.

It was six full weeks before I could go about again, and then I learned that the suspected man had been acquitted, my old schoolmaster was dead, and the Austins had sold off their farm at so ruinous a sacrifice that every one thought Day's house would have to follow it, and little or nothing be left them after all.

I rode across, as soon as I was able, and pressed the most liberal help upon Henry Austin. But he sadly and firmly declined, saying, "There were reasons why he could not possibly accept aid from me, and that if I knew all, I would not offer it." I looked upon his melancholy, faded face, and wondered was it partly remorse for the wrong that he had done, or entirely his own calamity that made his cheek so pale and wan. And I longed to tell him everything, although I could not guess how much more misery and guilt a confession then would have averted.

With an awakened conscience, and the ruin I had caused perpetually before me, my punishment was begun. I had long neglected prayer; but now I wished to pray, and dared not. Confession was the one thing far from me, and without confession I could not approach God, nor

pretend to trust in Christ; but I used to brood remorsefully over the various steps by which I fell, and think how easy it had been once to pause, and how impossible it was to turn back now. First, I had deceived and taught Alice to deceive her father. That was the blot which Austin hit with such fatal effect in my otherwise blameless love. Then I had nursed vague but fierce desires of vengeance against all who were concerned in my disappointment, and in the supreme hour of my destiny those lawless desires hurled me into a dreadful crime, as irresistibly as the rapid above Niagara hurls its victim into the gulf. And now I could do nothing to repair my guilty deed, for Austin's remorse would not allow him to accept aid from me. Suppose I told him that I knew all, that I had spoken to his father-in-law that fatal evening, and had promised to forgive everything? Why, then he would begin to suspect me, and my sickness since would confirm him, and the two labourers might turn up and make all sure. Well for me that the fire had driven all thought of my visit from every person's head who might have told him. No, I must stay quiet and look on. I found no place for repentance, though I sought it carefully with tears.

And now that my revenge was sated, I could not fail to lament its effects upon both Alice and her husband. She grew more and more nervous, and wasted visibly away; her fine large eyes lost their former brilliance, and began to look swollen and red, and have dark rings underneath them, as

of one who slept restlessly and little. Her husband strove in vain to find respectable employment, and compulsory idleness joined with his bitter disappointment to make him sullen and morose to every one but Alice. I more than forgave him everything, when I saw afterwards how completely his worst mood was subdued by her very presence, much less by her lightest word.

My opportunities of observing them more closely began when Alice's first sickly child was born. Knowing how his mood must be softened at such a time, I found him loitering outside their miserable lodgings, and began to speak to him as kindly and gently as I could, telling him that if our quarrel were ten times as bitter as ever it had been, he should not think only of himself, but of his family. To them, if I might not say to him, I now made an offer, not of help, but of fair employment, in which he would be of use to me as much as I could be to him. For my health was shaken, and I wanted a confidential man—half a steward and half a superintendent—to take my place whenever I could not go about, and to put his hand to anything whenever I was strong enough to do my own part. If he would come, I should buy in some new fields, and if not, I should deny myself the wish to have them. They were good and cheap land. Poor Austin fairly cried, and said he would do anything to serve me, and that I little knew how much he had to make good, and it would save his wife and child from beggary.

(To be concluded in our next.)

RELIGION IN THE HOME.

BY THE REV. W. B. MACKENZIE, M.A.

IT is a remarkable testimony respecting Obed-edom, a Levite, of the city of Gathrimmon, in Manasseh, that when the ark of the Lord was lodged in his house for three months, "the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and his household. And it was told King David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God." The ark was the most sacred emblem of the Jewish service. Its form was that of a chest, overlaid with gold, surmounted with angelic figures, bending reverently forward towards each other, as if contemplating its mysterious contents; while the glory, betokening the Divine Presence, irradiated the sacred symbol.

On a disastrous battle with the Philistines, the ark was carried off the field in triumph, and placed for a while in an idol temple. After many years of national neglect, David removed it to Jerusalem; but owing to some in-

cautious irreverence in its passage thither, which God severely visited upon Uzzah, the ark was placed for three months under the care of Obed-edom. This devout service was repaid by the singular measure of blessing enjoyed both by himself and his household, inasmuch that public attention was called to the fact, and notice of it even reached the ears of the king—"The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth to him, because of the ark of God." This same Obed-edom is afterwards mentioned as ministering before the Lord with harps, cymbals, and psalteries, and was selected as one of the doorkeepers of the ark; and it would seem that his descendants long occupied places of some importance in the house of God. At this day, there are three or four acres of land distinguished for their abundant fertility, called now "the Abode of the Blessed One," which are said to be the site of Obed-edom's house; and if so, afford a testimony, even to our own day, of the observable and

abiding blessing with which the Lord distinguishes the families which faithfully serve him.

Thus Obed-edom's household became remarkable for its unusual and long-continued prosperity. There is a great difference in this respect. Some families scarcely know what the brightness of prosperity means; now and then some fitful gleam of sunshine passes over their gloomy threshold, but not often even that; while others seem to luxuriate in ease and abundance, as if the original taint of sorrow were somehow suspended in their favour. Some begin well, and enjoy the unbroken recurrence of daily comforts for many years; but by-and-by, the wheel of life changes; new elements are introduced, and the aspect of things becomes less bright. But after all, these things are not chance. There are certain elements which, if cherished or neglected, tend to multiply or diminish the permanent prosperity of family life. What those elements are, the case of Obed-edom which we are here considering, reveals at once. Doubtless he stood well, previously, in social estimation, and gained golden opinions. Habits of family virtue were already maturing, and no small share of prosperity had fallen to his lot. When the ark was passing through his neighbourhood, and the visitation upon Uzzah made its removal difficult, men were not surprised at the proposal of Obed-edom to receive it into his house; it showed his enlightened confidence in God, and desire to honour him before the world; and the exuberance of his domestic blessing was dated from the time that he received that sacred symbol into his care.

It cannot be repeated too often, nor can any amount of illustrations be reckoned superfluous to deepen the conviction, that the presence of God diligently sought for and enjoyed in a family, is the only source of its abiding prosperity. Obed-edom distinctly aimed at this. He might have secured other things, and striven, as thousands now strive, to construe them into blessings; but he would have found that something else was wanting. Families may seem prosperous without religion; they may seem to have as large a share of comfort as usually falls to our lot, and fewer disadvantages than others; they may "live in perfect love and peace together," and seem to lack nothing; but somehow or other, it is evident that their cup is not full. They cannot account for it, but each day makes them more conscious that some element is wanting. It is not that any grave calamity has befallen them. Happily, no blank as yet mars the integrity of their home circle; no face is missing to create daily sorrow among survivors; no voice, once always cheering, now, alas! to be heard no more; but still there is something lacking which they ought to have; something which meets deeper wants, abides unaltered amid change and decay, adds reality to what seems to become every day

more vain and empty, and will give brighter hopes hereafter when the vision of life is over. Obed-edom fully found out the secret of all this, when he opened his house to receive the ark of God; and though now God has given us no such visible symbols, yet does he now come to dwell in the houses and the hearts of his people; and wherever he is, he comes with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus, and makes even the trials and changes of this world to work for good, and augment the felicity of his chosen people.

The presence of God confers signal blessings on the children of the family. You will readily understand how the well-being of a house depends on them, when you recollect what a large place they occupy in its anxieties and affections. What unselfish love, what pure joy, what constant care and solicitude, what vigilance and forethought, what maturing of plans, what guarding against evils, what joyous anticipations of successful results, what clouds darken the sky from any suspicion that all is not going on well, and what heart-breaking disappointments if the plans and prospects of the children should even seem to end in failure! But nothing is so certain to bring down God's blessings upon them as the consciousness that He dwells as the "Ruler and Guide" of their home. It may not be perfect; but they have found the secret of making it so. Events are sure to disturb the joyous aspect of the brightest household; but they no longer repeat the world's vain question, for some one to show them any good; they can now look upward to their Father which is in heaven, and say, with devout and grateful satisfaction, "Lord, lift thou upon us the light of thy countenance."

It is true that the Holy Spirit alone can give spiritual life to our households; but we can mould the character, and make the temple ready for the Divine Presence. We can build the altar and lay the sacrifice in order, and then wait in confident assurance for the promised blessing from heaven. We can train our children up in the way they should go; seek to bind their will to submission to the Divine will; cultivate filial and confiding communion with Him about everything; train them to believe in Him, to fear Him, to love Him with all their heart and mind and soul and strength, to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put their whole trust in Him, to call upon Him, to honour his holy name and his Word, and to serve Him truly all the days of their life. A family thus brought up in the devout habits of Christian life, at church, at home, and in secret, studying his Word, and praying in the Spirit day by day, will surely at length receive manifest tokens of God's approbation and blessing.

The Divine Presence in a family will ensure the

cultivation of filial obedience. It is impossible to overrate the extent to which disobedience mars and hinders the blessedness of families. It was "man's first disobedience" which "brought sin into the world and all our woes;" and it has continued to multiply and darken the world with woe ever since. Admit this prolific evil into home life and everything goes wrong. The parent makes himself partaker of the child's violation of the Fifth Commandment, and both must pay the penalty. Disobedience destroys all parental reverence, and soon loosens all the links of mutual endearment; the opinions of parents will be rudely questioned; their will disregarded, and every day make some fresh inroad on the sacredness of the parental relationship. The parent who connives at filial insubordination is training his child to a life of self-torment, and, perhaps, a death-bed of sorrowful remorse. The greatest blessing which can be bestowed upon a child is to subjugate and wisely discipline the will. A man that never learnt to obey is never fit to rule. A fiery, ungoverned temper, that never yielded to the curb of just authority, but plunges on at the impulse of any passionate caprice—how is it possible for him to wear the harness of common life, and with "a quiet mind" and patient fidelity to "learn and labour truly to get his own living, and to do his duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call him?" Could you go into the private history of the thousands who squander their useless lives away in vanity and indolence—a drag upon the wheel of others' progress, and a heavier burden upon themselves—you would find that the secret mischief originated in their defective habits of early subordination. They never learnt subjection while under their parents' roof, and ever after, when circumstances changed, and the stern necessities of life demanded them to deny themselves, a thousand murmuring complaints betoken the revolting disloyalty of the heart, and life becomes one incessant conflict between the demands of duty and the restless inclination to rebel.

The presence of God in a house is likely to promote steady, settled habits in daily life. Everything will be maintained in order, harmony, and wise arrangement. Each member of such a house will have his own work fixed and settled, and ever after regard it as the employment which the Great Ruler of all things means him to do. Then, I say, go on with it, and go through with it. "Give thyself wholly to these things." Have a position and power of your own. Some people are like an oak that has grown for ages till it has become a shelter and an ornament, leaving, when it is removed, a blank that surrounding trees seek in vain to fill up. Others never seem to root themselves thoroughly—they have no hold, no

leafy adorning, no welcome expansion to shelter or nourish feeble efforts, but may be pulled up any day and not missed. Remember how the business of life was regarded by the Great Example, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. I delight to do it: thy law is within my heart."

Few have any adequate idea how much may be accomplished by habits of persevering diligence. The cuttings and embankments of our railroad systems were made by spades and barrows. Birds build their nests straw by straw. The islands of the South Seas are due to the labours of coral insects. "Whatever I have done," said Sir Isaac Newton, "is due entirely to patient thought." The successful rescue of the Abyssinian captives, imprisoned four hundred miles from the sea-coast, by an army compelled to make roads and transport their own provisions and heavy implements of war, on the backs of elephants and camels, over lofty mountains and through perilous defiles, is an instance of the persevering conquest of difficulties, by the power of patient labour, which fills the world with admiration. By continued and progressive efforts a man's powers are expanded and strengthened, and he attains a degree of proficiency that leaves his less persevering competitors far behind. There is no ingredient in character more valuable than this "patient continuance in well-doing." Still, it is not to be acquired without strong effort and resolute determination. The consciousness of God's presence and blessing is a great incentive. "I have set the Lord always before me; he is at my right hand: therefore I shall not be moved." A young man who has not this grace of perseverance, is fond of novelty, ease, change; he loves to riot among new scenes, to indulge the wantonness of caprice, or stretch himself on the couch of indolence, and then expects that success will come to him without an effort. These are weeds of noxious growth that must be uprooted. The hardy plants of real prosperity for either world are not to be found beneath the shade of such baneful indulgences. Selfish propensities must be counteracted, wayward humours dispelled, and habits of self-discipline must be cultivated; then, through God's blessing, we may expect the duties of life will be fulfilled, neither interrupted by the allurements of folly, nor abandoned amid the temptations of sin.

A man of great eminence and worth obtained a good situation in London for a son of his, a youth of unsettled, changeable disposition. Soon after, this remark occurs in his diary—"I see that in my poor boy which almost breaks my heart; his instability is continually appearing. He must leave London; and what to do with him I know not." Another situation was obtained elsewhere, but his restless disposition again showed itself, and he enlisted in the army. Discharged from the

service, he enlisted a second time, and his father procured a second discharge. A new situation was found, and this again speedily forsaken. With no hope of settling him on land, his father obtained some situation in the merchant service, which he deserted, and was severely punished. For the third time he enlisted in the army, and his family never saw him again. He died off Lisbon, there is some reason to hope, confessing and lamenting that he had so grievously sinned against Heaven and his earthly parents, added to their life-sorrows, and brought his own days prematurely to an end. "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

The presence of the Lord diffused prosperity throughout the house of Obed-edom. It is a promise too "exceeding great and precious" for most men's degenerate faith to embrace, that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Having found it to be true, this faithful Levite has recorded his experience for our learning; and the history of modern Christianity could furnish many similar instances of exemplary fidelity to God being recompensed by the accumulation of earthly prosperity. Why not? It is true that religion puts its veto upon many practices which the world adopts as indispensable to prosperity. The King of Moab, annoyed by Balaam's refusal to accept his bribes for cursing, taunted him with the reproach that "the Lord had kept him back from honour." Conscientious men are kept back from temptations to iniquitous worldly advancement. But these losses, if losses they be, are more than compensated. The Obed-edoms of our day still find that the Lord blesses them and their house, and all that appertains to them. Whatever things go to form their earthly prosperity—bodily health, vigour, and cheerfulness—competent income to meet their moderate wants—social estimation giving them a place in the good opinion of others—affectionate endearments at home—mental cultivation affording personal resources and occupation—these things continued for large portions

of life, and crowned with the veneration which gathers round good men in the evening of life—all these are enriched and sanctified by the blessing of the Lord. His blessing augments the value of earthly comforts, and more than compensates for their loss. No man, however godly, can pass through life without tasting its sorrows and feeling the burden of heavy cares; he is exposed to the storms that spread desolation and change everywhere; but "he is like the tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

There are faint historic notices that the blessing of this pious Levite was not lost after his death, but was preserved for his sake among his children's children. Posthumous fame may be an empty object of ambition, but posthumous blessedness—to receive the tokens of Divine favour ourselves, with the assurance that it shall be continued to our children—no higher felicity can be enjoyed on this side heaven. The time will come when earthly parents must gather their households around them to receive their farewell blessing—some, perhaps, still young and ill able to bear the rough storms of life, and stand firmly against its assaults and evil; but he "who has set the Lord always before him," counting the Divine Presence his best inheritance, bequeaths a legacy which may exalt his children to riches and honour in both worlds. Other names may lose their endearment, and bright visions of earthly comfort begin to fade, but the NAME that is above every name, and the glimpse of His coming glory, will sustain the soul in its last conflict, and light up the future with hopes unutterably radiant. And if, when just standing on the threshold of another world, we can look forward with calm assurance to the crown of righteousness laid up for us, and have a good hope that those whom we may leave in tears shall one day join us in the "everlasting habitations," then every trace of death's sting will be extracted, and the tomb becomes a lighted valley, peopled with bright attendants, and leading to the Father's house.

"CASTLES IN THE AIR."

COME here to me, my child, and say what you have been about,
Sitting so long in the window and looking dreamily out;
With hands so idly folded, and those far-off looking eyes,
As if you saw strange secrets writ in gold upon the skies.

Come here and sit with granny, by the firelight's fickle glow,
How like her own life's waning flame—burning quite pale and low.
My child, an anxious fear for thee, like mist from the earth's chill breast,
Rises and hangs in shadowy folds, dimming my looked-for rest;—

A fear that my darling is dreaming the fair morn of
her life away,
And heeds not the Master's word—to "work while
'tis called to-day."
Oh! comfort me and promise—it may be my parting
prayer—
To give up these idle dreams—these poor "castles
in the air."
You think, perhaps, that I am old, and querulous,
and cross;
How could a wrinkled granny rightly value such a
loss?
Yes, true, I've more than numbered my threescore
years and ten;
I cannot now be courted—cannot now be young
again.
I now have nothing left to do, heroical or grand,
Save to sit still and strain dim eyes on towards a
promised land.
Yet think not that the meaning of such thoughts I
cannot know,
I, too, built castles, darling, in the old days long
ago.
Yes, rich and radiant castles, that arose, and
shimmered, and fell
With a hopeless crash, that even now my heart
recalls too well.
And it is just because I know the charm is subtle
and strong,
That I would counsel you to-night of its folly, pain,
and wrong.
Your castle now looks brilliant, as the crown of a
moonlit cloud,
Bright hopes, like glistening stars, round it in
clusters crowd.
Nay, dear, it needs no magic to read your face
aright;
Is it not flooded, even now, with your wayward
fancy's light?
But in suspicion's dreary dawn, when those fickle
stars have paled,

And the costly things of First Love, of Trust, and
Faith, have failed;
When in the chilling twilight the world itself looks grey,
And your moonlit cloud has wept itself in opal tears
away,—
You will turn then from its ruins with a sense of
want and pain,
And go with a sad and aching heart to the task of
life again.
God gives to those who wait on Him his peace—but
only sorrow
To those who, in their madness, boast of an unknown
to-morrow.
The future, with its secret things, belongs to Him
alone;
The present, with its blessings and its duties, is our
own.
Let us then ask, as workmen, every morn our Lord's
commands,
Perfect the work he gives each day, with love-inspired
hands.
Then come at night, and, kneeling, give it back to
Him in prayer,
And leave no time for building foolish "castles in
the air."
How can my darling sit each day, thus ever idly
dreaming,
While God's own world with sin, and woe, and
ignorance is teeming?
Will she not now go forth to work and consecrate her
powers,
To bless God's sick, and poor, and weak, and
brighten lonely hours?
Oh! leave to God your future—let Him shape it as
He will;
Yes, trust, my child, a Father's plan—a Master
Builder's skill.
Your treasure is in heaven; Christ has gone there to
prepare
Bright mansions far excelling your poor "castles in
the air." I. C. P.

A BRAVE LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DEEPPDALE VICARAGE," "MARK WARREN," ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XLI.

ALICE'S "GOOD-BYE."



Alice walked away, she remembered another invalid whom she had half promised to see. A little flush came to her pale cheek, as she thought of Charley Blake. Should she go, or not?

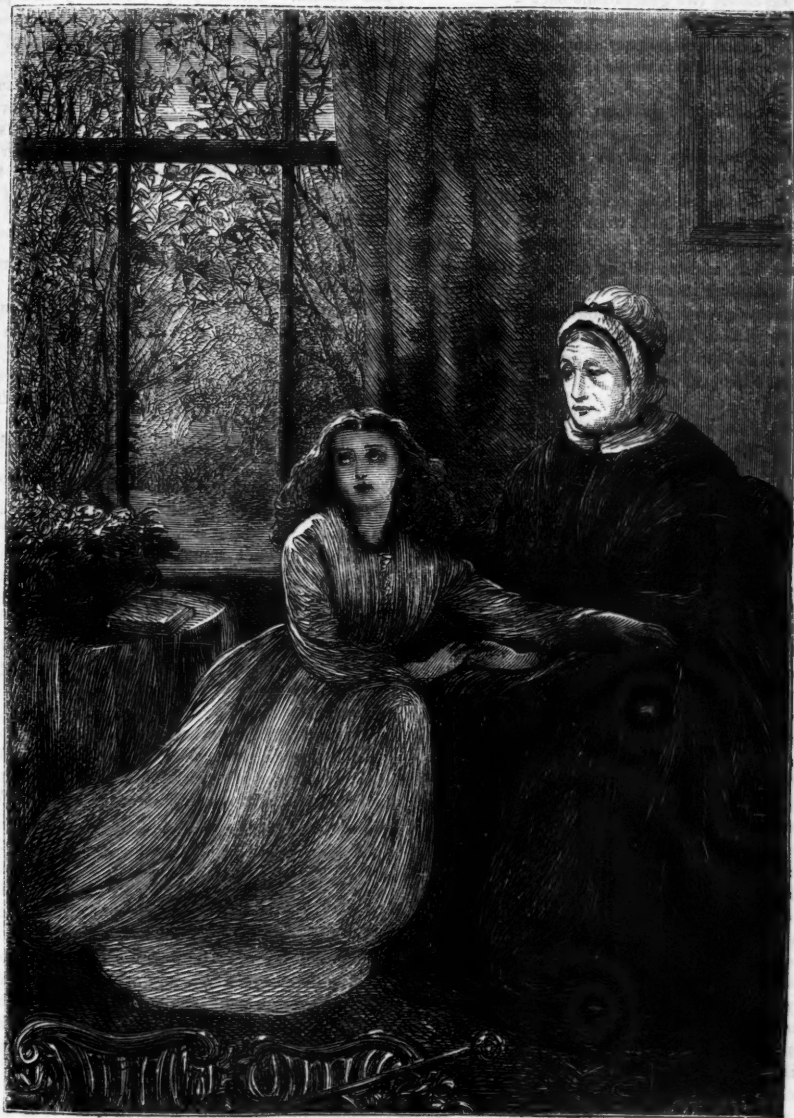
It would be unkind not to see him once before his departure. His departure was close at hand, and would put a barrier between them. She could never go to Harold Blake's house. Oh, no! of course—never!

But Harold would not be come from the mill. It wanted a full hour to the time of his return; and

she was very near the spot. Well, she would step in just a few minutes, and say good-bye to Charley. That word good-bye was always a painful one, she thought. But she would get it said, and herself at home, before there was the least chance of Harold coming back.

At that precise moment, as it happened, Harold was not at the mill. He was at Mr. Mapleson's house, and was holding a conversation with his employer. The subject of the conversation was the Sylvesters.

"It is just what one might have expected," said Mr. Mapleson, from his easy chair: he had the gout again; "those people have been driving at it for two generations back. Come, Mr. Blake,



(Drawn by M. ELLEN EDWARDS.)

"Come here and sit with granny, by the firelight's sickle glow."—p. 727.

have a glass of wine, will you? There it is, on the table."

"Thank you! I do not drink wine. What were you saying about two generations back?"

"Oh! the Sylvesters. They are a bad lot; as proud as Lucifer, and as poor as beggars!"

Harold's whole frame tingled. He might have had an electric shock.

"In fact, they are just on the crash now. My lady keeps it up bravely—a plucky woman, Harold—but, bless you, they will be in the *Gazette* in a month."

Harold's frame tingled again. He could scarcely bear it; but Mr. Mapleson went on—

"And serve them right too. Why, they've ruined half the town; and would the other, if they had the chance, with their *debts*!"

"You are very severe, Mr. Mapleson."

"No more than there is warrant for. The young man is as bad as his mother, every bit. He is a Sylvester to his heart's core. I know nothing of the daughter."

The daughter!—that was just it. Harold's cheek was in a flame.

"I'll be bound her dressmakers' bills——"

"Oh, hush—hush!—that is not charitable," cried Harold, repressively.

"My dear fellow, I judge from inference. However, she will have to come down a peg, that's very certain, and get her own living—perhaps by stitching."

"No!" thought Harold—so vehemently that he could scarce help speaking the words aloud—"she shall not get her own living. Mr. Mapleson, nor stitch either, while my name is Harold Blake!"

"Now then," continued Mr. Mapleson, who was having his afternoon's chat with Harold, "we have had enough of the Sylvesters. How goes on the house?"

Harold could hardly recover himself enough to say that it was going on well.

"I am glad to hear it. When do you get in?"

"Next week, I believe," replied Harold, still absently.

"And a good thing too. It will set poor Charley up—eh?"

"Yes," said Harold, for once disloyal to his brother, and thinking of something else, "I hope it will set Charley up."

"I tell you what, Harold Blake; that cottage is the prettiest place about Newbury. It will get you a wife in no time!"

Harold's face flamed again.

"It will, mark my words. And the Newbury young ladies might do a worse thing. I shall tell them so, if they come to consult me."

"Thank you," said Harold, drawing on his gloves. He had had enough of this conversation. He wanted to go home.

He had heard rumours about the Sylvesters; indeed, he knew pretty much how things stood with them. But this knowledge did not prevent the words

"crash," and "gazette," from giving him a kind of panic. It had come very near that dread crisis, when the old walls could no longer hide the misery that was within. These people, tenderly and proudly nurtured, would be turned adrift on the world—a world that hated and condemned them; at least, with one exception.

Who could hate Alice? who could condemn her? How terrible to think of her being whirled over the edge of that abyss! He did not mean she should. He meant, with his strong arm, to pluck her back. He meant to make his home so that it could be her home. He meant to ask her, in this hour of storm and peril, to come to him and be secure.

Would she come?

Oh, yes; he thought so! He never once remembered the Sylvesters!

When he reached his lodgings, having thought of these things by the way, the landlady came out of her room.

"We've had the most beautiful music overhead, Mr. Blake," said she, "that ever you heard in your life."

"Music!" cried Harold, quickly and sharply; "what music?"

"Miss Sylvester has been, and——"

"Gone is she?" exclaimed Harold, with a blank face.

"No, she isn't gone. She won't be long, I'm thinking. It's past her time, but Master Charley was fretting, and she just stayed a bit to comfort him."

Harold stole up-stairs, but he did not enter the room. He heard the well-known voice speaking earnestly and kindly. Then he stole down again into the street.

He walked backwards and forwards on the pavement before the house. He was waiting for Alice.

She came out presently, and then he went up to her. He meant to walk home with her. He did not tell her so, for she looked a little frightened when she saw him. She spoke to him hastily, and hurried a few steps forward. But he kept pace with her. When she slackened her pace, which she did presently, he was close by her. It was evident he did not mean to be shaken off.

Though he was silent now, amid the noise and bustle, he had plenty to say presently. He had considered every word. He had thought of it, by night and day. And all his musings, and his considerings, ended in one simple question, fraught with the weal or woe of a lifetime:

Would she come?

She had found out, by this time, that he meant to stay. She had not spoken any more than he had. She walked along, her eyes cast down, her heart full of vivid consciousness. She knew—she had known these months past—that he loved her.

And when she had wanted to picture to herself any one good, or noble, or worthy to be loved, she had thought secretly of Harold Blake.

They had cleared the town. The still spring

evening was sweet and balmy. There were violets growing on the bank, and here and there a bunch of primroses. It was here Harold meant to ask her to come. He whispered it to her very gently. He told her of a home, of security, of a love that would be hers till death. He smoothed from her path the rugged hardships that lay there but an hour ago; and he ended with the words repeated again, and with deeper emphasis: Would she come?

She listened to him, every word. At first she was very pale, and then the blood rushed to her face and neck. She hardly knew what to say or to do. It was her first offer of marriage.

It would be very sweet, that home, that security, that good man's love. But her mother and Raymond?

She had heard them speak of Harold Blake, and also of the mythical person, on whom they hoped to bestow the hand of their daughter, and their sister.

"Alice must not look lower than a coronet," Lady Sylvester had said.

"He cannot expect us to notice him, now he has become the overseer of a silk mill," Raymond had said, slightly, when alluding to Harold Blake.

Alice remembered these speeches, and they seemed to pierce her heart through and through. She was still remembering them, her mind abstracted and distressed, when Harold spoke again.

He was not the man for anything clandestine. He was going to woo her openly, not by chance meetings and secret communications. He said he should ask her hand of her mother and her brother. Yes, of Lady Sylvester and of Raymond!

Oh, it could not be believed how these words startled her! There was the abyss down deep at her feet. She was not a hair's-breadth from its brink. An abyss down which so much that was precious had been sacrificed. Honesty, peace, happiness—all had gone; and think you they would spare love?

She could almost hear what they would say, and see how they would look—her mother and Raymond!

She had never set herself in opposition, open and direct, to the great Sylvester dignity. Adamantine as a rock it stood, and all who struck there, went down and perished.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE ROCK OF ADAMANT.

SHE stood at the gate after he had left her. He was obliged to go. He had far outstayed his time. He walked away full of hope; for, though she had not said it, it had been implied as clearly as could be, that his affection was returned. And then, what hindrance could there be to their happiness?

So thought he, as he went back to Charley.

His home was complete. It was as snug a nest—as peaceful a retreat—as any home could be. It was not grand or pretentious like her own, but she would like it all the better for that. And he wanted her to come before the old fabric fell with the crash it would do, presently. And he thought she would come.

For a few blissful moments, Alice had thought so

too. This bright gleam seemed to come to her across the dark, troubled waters. This peace, this rest, this security—it was as if Heaven had held it out to her. Should she do well to trifle with a good man's love; to fling away the jewel which shone in the dark, and was so precious? Her heart spoke loudly on the subject. She could hear its voice above all the tumult of her thoughts; and it said, *No!*

It told her there were few like Harold Blake. She knew that she had never seen another. Why should she not accept the blessing? Why should she not come?

But her mother? and Raymond?

She knew how desperate their fortunes were. It could not be hidden from her. Their daily life had become one of terrors and evasions. Yet Pride would hold its own to the last. They would despise her lover, and try to wrest her jewel from her; and have out the rotten arguments, she had heard from her very cradle. She knew all this, as well as could be.

How should she tell them? By word of mouth? Oh, no! that would scarcely be possible. She had discovered the plan, by which ruin was to be averted. She shuddered as she thought how love's pure faith was to be bartered for gold, and a shameful victory obtained over their reverses.

And if this happened—if Raymond married Mrs. Brooklyn—a thing which made her cheek tingle and her pulses throb—she knew what would be expected of her.

That she should flaunt in the gay circles of the world, and, as Raymond had said, openly, "Find her fortune there!"

How her soul recoiled at the very thought! Better for her the profoundest obscurity. Better to eat the hard-earned bread of honest labour—better to be cast out, and utterly forgotten; since, in her lowly lot, she could, at least, have a conscience void of offence: she could, at least, walk humbly with her God!

She mused on these things as she walked slowly up to the house.

She would write, and tell her mother. She would put it down in black and white, that she loved Harold Blake.

She went to her room, and closed the door. She sat a little time considering. But her considerations all led to one issue. The idea gained upon her. It would be better to write, and at once.

There was great happiness to her, in the thought of this good man's love. Her heart, amid all its conflicts, rested here with content and satisfaction. She would not barter or gainsay that love, come what might.

But her hand trembled as she wrote. When she had finished, and the fact lay before her, looking her in the face, with all its maze of difficulties, she trembled.

As she wrote, she had wept and smiled. It was a kind of April day—smiles and tears.

She dared not delay. She would not have her lover come too soon, and take the Sylvesters by surprise.

She would fold up the billet, and lay it on the dressing-table in her mother's room.

By this time, her feelings were wrought up to a painful state. She trembled from head to foot. Her lips were parched and feverish. She stood some minutes, before she dared to go.

If she had but one to deal with, she thought, as she stood—but her mother, or but Raymond—she might prevail. But together, these two, who were of one heart and one mind, might crush her. Only that she would be firm, and hold her jewel with the strength of life!

Hark! a door opens in the distance. She must do it now or never. She stole along the passage, and her white face showed another just as white, in the mirror over her mother's table.

The poor tempest-tossed heart beat fearfully, and then she had done it. She had told her mother that she loved Harold Blake!

Back to her chamber, trembling like some guilty thing, and weeping for very terror of what she had done.

Hearing, as it were, the ghostly phalanx of her race wail and shriek down the dreary passages, with the blood surging to her temples, and every pulse tingling with excitement, she sat down and hid her face in her hands.

Then she became cold and chill as marble. An icy sensation crept to her heart and brain—a presentiment, if you like to call it so.

By this time her mother would have read the letter! Would she come to her—the mother? And the least sound made her start and tremble. But the old house is still as ever. She does not come.

Then Alice rose. The worst, perhaps, was over. She must brace and nerve herself for the next scene in her life's history; and she would not brood here any longer in silence and loneliness. She would leave her chamber, and go.

The drawing-room was empty. She went in, and stood by the fire. She tried to reason herself to calmness, and she had but half succeeded, when she heard footsteps along the corridor.

They were both coming—her mother and Raymond. She knew it would begin directly. She knew the Sylvester dignity was all in arms—that the abyss was deep, the rock adamantine, as ever. She guessed it, by the silence that brooded after they had entered; she knew it by their faces. Just so pitiless had they looked, when Raymond broke faith with Josephine!

A rustling sound disturbed the silence. Lady Sylvester had the letter in her hand. She was opening it for the second time. She read it aloud, word for word, to the very end. Alice, with burning cheeks and downcast eyes, stood and listened.

Then her mother spoke to her. She wished, she said—and there was a touch of mockery in her tone—she wished to know for certain whether this letter were written by her daughter.

While the letter was being read, Alice had been telling herself to be brave and firm. Her heart echoed it, word by word.

It was all true, she replied, in a low, distinct voice: she did write that letter.

A brief silence followed the confession. You might have heard a pin drop.

Then the silence broke up. She spoke out boldly. It was her time to be bold. She did not mean that they should trample her love to the ground. She spoke of Harold Blake, that he was a man of gentle birth and breeding as they were; that he had behaved nobly; and she told them how heroic he had been; and—here the crimson flush dyed her brow, and face, and neck, and her voice became tremulous—that she loved him.

Bold words to utter on the very verge of the rock and the abyss!

Lady Sylvester was not demonstrative, as we know. It was against her creed to be betrayed into anything approaching a scene; yet, when this egregious insult was offered to the Sylvester grandeur, the iron grip, with which she held down her feelings, had almost given way. There was an ominous flash in her eye, that boded no good to Harold.

She threw the letter into the fire. She had twisted it into a strangely contorted shape. While it blazed and consumed to ashes, she said, calmly—

"You have had my answer, Alice. I beg the subject may never be referred to again."

"Never," echoed Raymond, fervently; "never!"

It was, as she thought, between these two—one mind, one resolve.

Still she was bold. She spoke out again. She said her happiness was at stake. She begged they would be merciful, and delay the decision until they had had opportunities of judging more about the matter; till Raymond—and she turned to him, as though appealing to him—till Raymond had seen Harold Blake.

But he did not respond to her appeal. He set his face against her like a flint.

They had not been watchful enough, he said; they had forgotten that Alice was no true Sylvester, else this disgrace—how the word stung her to the quick—this disgrace had not happened. They had far other thoughts for her, than a marriage with Harold Blake.

No words can express the disdain with which he brought out the name.

Again she spoke. Her courage waxed higher, as her case grew more desperate.

She could not give him up, she said. They had no power over her affections. She would not disobey them—her mother, and Raymond—but they should not force her into disloyalty to her love—to Harold Blake.

She did not blush this time, nor was her voice tremulous. Her face looked white and resolute. She was chafing against the sharp edges of the adamantine rock.

Singularly like each other, at this moment, were the mother and daughter.

It would not do to oppose force by force. Lady Sylvester sought out her other weapons.

"Alice," and she went near to her, and put her arm round her, "you know not what it is you covet. I, who am older and wiser, see what the end will be. Marry this man—so far beneath the requirements of your position and your race—marry him, and what then? We shall not acknowledge either yourself or him; you will be separated from us for ever—from us who have loved you so tenderly, and been so much dearer to you than he can ever be; we who have suffered so long, and been so true to each other, will be divided and split up at last. But be it so! Your marriage-peal will wring a knell in our ears, my child. We shall never see you again; nor will you see us. The grave could not so read us apart, as this fatal marriage with Harold Blake!"

The girl trembled. This was the thing she dreaded most of all.

"I had hoped," continued Lady Sylvester, her voice becoming soft and caressing, "when the struggle is past—a struggle you have not appreciated, because you could not understand it—when the old house stands firm again, and we are saved—I had hoped for peaceful days to recompense this evil. And the days may come; and I shall look round for Alice, but she will be gone. I shall stand alone. She for whom I have done and suffered so much will have forsaken me. I shall have no daughter!"

It was very terrible. Alice hid her face in her hands and wept.

Yet why need it be so? She gathered courage to ask the question; and she checked back her tears. Why need it be so? Why should not the new tie bind the old ones but the closer?

It could not be! They spoke at once, and with a vehemence that startled her. She did not understand the nature of her own position, nor the requirements of her house. They had wedded with equals—the Sylvesters—from ancient times till now; and, on occasions, they had known how to suffer.

It was Raymond who said this; his voice sharp and bitter exceedingly.

Besides, was the sacrifice to be all his? Had he crushed his life's-blood out, as it were, that she should fling herself into the arms of a nameless adventurer? Had he done so much to build, that she should destroy? Was this a time—when the battle was so sore against them—was this a time to dally with an idle whim—a love of a day old? Was not every energy—every thought—required to save themselves from a shameful ruin?

What could she say to these arguments, advanced so stoutly against her? She knew they were unsound—nay, rotten to their very foundations—and she clung to Harold Blake. The light still came across the troubled waters, and she would not give it up. There was as much persistence in her nature as in theirs.

If for the moment she was silent, it was not that she yielded. She was true and loyal to him in her heart. "Home," "peace," "a good man's love," rang their sweet changes in her ears. She would abide by the blessing a kind Heaven had sent her. And when the storm had passed, and the Sylvester dignity had sufficiently asserted itself, perhaps they would bid her go to him, and be blessed!

(To be continued.)

HOW MINNIE BECAME A GIPSY.

WAKE up, Minnie, dear! the sun has been shining this long while—and if you do not get up, you will lose your rosy cheeks and all your pretty looks, which would never do, would it, my darling?"

"I don't care about the sun; I don't want to get up, and I won't; I like staying in bed best."

"Oh! but my pretty little one would not like to be an ugly fright, would she?"

A torrent of peevish exclamations followed this last appeal, which, however, had the desired effect. Minnie jumped up, and began dressing herself, during which process her well-known friend, the glass, was by no means forgotten.

Minnie Langdon was the only child of wealthy parents. She was very pretty; but, unfortunately, she was too well aware of it, and, though only seven years old, had formed very decided notions as to what was due to her personal appearance, thinking, as vain little girls are apt to think, that "looking nice" entitled her to no end of petting and indulgence.

Minnie's vanity had been greatly fostered by her

nurse, who, being very fond of her little charge, showed her affection by the most absurd flattery, which, though very palatable, was anything but beneficial to the little thing. It was not until lately that her mamma had found this out, and when she did so, her efforts were apparently useless to eradicate the effects of the nurse's foolish conduct; so much more quickly are evil impressions received and retained than good ones.

Minnie lived in a country village, and a most beautiful place it was. There you could obtain as large a bouquet as ever you could carry without even asking for it, and no one need desire more lovely or sweet-scented flowers than those wild ones. The birds, too—such a variety, and how sweetly they sang! they made you feel so musical that you could scarcely help singing yourself, at least so Minnie felt; and, to add to the attractions of the place, there was a splendid wood, which you could by no means fully appreciate until the very middle of the summer, and then, when it was so unbearably warm that you could do nothing but grumble, how delightful it was to wander about in the refreshing shade! This wood was Minnie's favourite resort, and she found very

little difficulty in persuading her nurse to walk there, instead of in the hot, dusty lanes of the neighbourhood. A great source of speculation to her, were "those funny red and yellow carts," as she called the gipsy caravans which were dotted about the barer part of the wood, and very great was her desire to see the inside of them; but her nurse, though usually so indulgent in gratifying her slightest wish, could never be won over to grant this one: for she said she should never forgive herself if her darling caught any disease of those dirty little gipsy children; and who could be sure that she would not?

One lovely summer's day Minnie awoke, as we have seen, in a very cross humour, and grumbled so much while dressing, that her nurse told her she must have "got out of bed the wrong side," but this remark only had the effect of increasing her ill-temper. She found fault with the bread-and-milk provided for her breakfast, wanting to know why she could not have some coffee in a cup like papa and mamma did. After breakfast, when told to fetch her lesson-books, she refused to do so, and it was not till her nurse had called Mrs. Langdon, that she could be reduced to anything like obedience.

Mrs. Langdon—although she loved her little girl dearly—was very strict with her if naughty; and when told by her mamma that she should not go out until she had said every lesson, Minnie knew it would be so, and as it was a great punishment to her not to be allowed to go for a walk, she began, very reluctantly, to open her books. But her ill-temper was by no means dispelled, and she found—though she would not own it—that it was a great hindrance to her: for learning a lesson badly, stumbling through it, and having to learn it again, took much longer than learning it thoroughly the first time would have done; so that, when she had finished, she found it so late that she would now have to wait till after dinner before she could go out.

That afternoon, as she walked along by the side of her nurse, she felt very revengeful indeed, and thought to herself, "I wish I could serve nurse out. I will, if I can;" but, before she had found an opportunity of doing so, they had arrived at the wood, where Minnie, as was her wont, set off in search of wild flowers. When she had gathered as many as she could conveniently carry, she ran back to show them; but her nurse was fast asleep on the grass.

The idea darted into Minnie's mind, that this was a fine opportunity to serve nurse out. Thought Minnie, "I will run away and hide myself; and, when nurse wakes up, she will begin to look for me, and perhaps call me, but I won't answer her, and then she'll think I'm lost, and she'll be in such a way!" And without further reflection, she darted away at her utmost speed, and, winding in and out among the trees and bushes, was soon quite out of sight of her nurse.

She had run a considerable distance when, catching her foot in a patch of tangled weeds, she fell heavily to the ground; and speedily forgetting, in the pain of the moment, her resolve not to speak, for fear of

being heard, she—without attempting to raise herself from the place in which she had fallen—began crying, and calling out, "Nurse!—nurse!" as loudly as she could. The grass just here being very long and soft, and her face being turned in the opposite direction, she neither heard the sound of approaching footsteps, nor perceived the owner of the feet which caused them. Great, therefore, was her astonishment as she felt herself lifted from the ground; and facing sharply round, she exclaimed, as she perceived who it was, "Why, Mary, is it you? how did you know I was here, and that I had fallen down?"

"Yes, Miss Minnie," replied Mary, "it is me. I was walking in the wood, and I heard some one crying. I thought it sounded like your voice, and I wondered what could be the matter, so I came here, and seeing you lying on the grass crying, I picked you up. But how is it, Miss Minnie, that you are here by yourself; where is your nurse?"

Minnie then related the whole of the day's adventures, winding up with the details of how finely she was serving nurse out, at which Mary laughed heartily, evidently regarding it as a great joke.

But in order fully to understand what followed, we must here give a short account of who this girl Mary was.

She had formerly lived with Minnie's mamma as nursemaid; but being convicted of theft, Mrs. Langdon had dismissed her. Her mother, who was a widow with a large family depending upon her for support, was so distressed at her daughter's conduct, and begged so hard for her to be tried once more, that Mrs. Langdon, deceived by a professed repentance on the girl's part, again employed her; but when she found that instead of requiting her kindness with gratitude, the girl was continuing in her former course, her indignation knew no bounds; and this time Mary was discharged, with an intimation to the effect that she might think herself decidedly lucky to have escaped a prison.

Finding that no one would take as a servant a girl who could not have a "character" from her last place, Mary, in a fit of desperation, joined a band of so-called gipsies, who were at that time stationed near the place where she lived. She never forgot the grudge she bore to Mrs. Langdon, for having, as she reasoned with herself, deprived her of the means of gaining an honest living: for she, like many another, quite lost sight of the fact that she was reaping what she herself had sown, and was only too ready to satisfy the little conscience she possessed, by persuading herself that it was not her own, but entirely Mrs. Langdon's fault, that she had adopted this dishonest mode of living.

Minnie having thus been thrown in her way, she determined not to lose so good an opportunity of revenging herself on her former mistress, or, as she termed it, "paying her out." Her plan was to carry the child off to the gipsies, who the day before had left the forest for another part of the country, Mary having remained behind for the purpose of carrying on a little scheme which was more profitable than

honest. This commission she had now executed to her satisfaction, and was on her way to rejoin the caravan. She, therefore, set about persuading the child to accompany her, which she found no very difficult matter, for knowing Minnie's love of flattery, and her great desire to see the inside of a gipsy caravan, with a skilful wielding of these weapons, and sundry promises of nice things, she soon gained her point, and they started off, Minnie's hand fast locked in hers.

They had not gone very far when Minnie began to grow tired and sleepy, and wanted to rest; but Mary told her they would "never get there" if they stopped; so taking the child in her arms, they continued on their way. In this comfortable position she soon fell asleep, and upon awaking, was surprised to find it quite dark. Frightened at the darkness, and feeling very hungry, for she had been asleep a long time, she began to cry to be taken back to her mamma, on which the hard-hearted girl told her, if she was not quiet, she would put her down and leave her there in the road; which threat had the desired effect, and after a few rebellious sobs, she again fell asleep. When she next awoke, a very different scene presented itself to her view; she was in what appeared to her a very dirty little room. A very dirty woman was standing at a little stove frying some bacon; and, on making a closer survey, she found that, instead of being in her own pretty little bed with pink and white curtains, she was lying on a bundle of straw.

The woman turned round at this moment, and, seeing the child awake, said to her, "So you've woke up, little un, 'ave yer? I think it's 'igh time. Just dress yerself as quick as yer can." With which injunction she threw Minnie some dirty, patched garments.

"Those are not my things," said Minnie, her indignation overcoming the fear which she felt towards the strange woman.

"Dear bless me! we're mighty partickler, I'm sure. If those aint your things, they're the only ones you'll get! So you'd better look sharp and put them on, if you want any breakfast."

This mention of breakfast had a greater effect than any other threat could have done. Poor Minnie was very hungry indeed, for she had never before gone so long without food; and she began slowly to put on the clothes which the woman had given her.

When she had, with some slight assistance, finished dressing, the woman, bidding her follow, opened the door; and Minnie, to her surprise, found herself in the open air. Here a little gipsy girl was preparing breakfast, and the woman, setting down the plate of bacon which she carried in her hand, shouted out, "Hi, there! breakfast!" Upon which Minnie heard a sound of several persons running, and looking round, she perceived several men and boys coming towards them.

They all sat down on the grass, forming a circle; and the little gipsy girl, who had for the last few minutes been busily engaged watching the contents of a tin can which was suspended over the fire from

a tripod, after the true gipsy style, now proceeded to detach the can from the hook on which it hung, and present it to an old man, who, having drunk from it copiously, passed it on to his next neighbour.

During this time Minnie had not remained unnoticed; the remarks made on her appearance were numerous, though not always of a very complimentary character. When they had finished their meal, Minnie was not sorry to find that none of the contents of the can remained, and, therefore, she must have water for her breakfast. How gladly would she have exchanged the hard crusts and water for some of the once despised bread-and-milk! but there was no chance of that, and she must eat what she had given her, or starve. As soon as she had devoured the scanty allowance of food, the woman sent her with the little gipsy girl to pick up sticks; which Minnie was very glad to do, if only to help to drive away the miserable feeling of loneliness she felt.

During the day, whenever any people passed within sight, Minnie was made to run after them and beg halfpence. The first time she was sent on this errand, she returned without having been able to summon sufficient courage for the purpose; but the woman beat the poor child so unmercifully, that she dared not do so again.

Before the end of the day, Minnie had become quite friendly with her little companion, who opened her heart so far as to tell Minnie to call her Polly.

That night Minnie's slumber was disturbed by the sound of men running about, and, on asking her little friend Polly what was the matter, she was told that one of the boys had been caught in the act of stealing and taken to prison, but he had managed to send a messenger (who had just arrived) to inform his friends they were in danger, and, as no time was to be lost, they were then preparing to leave the forest.

In about half an hour they had started; and by dawn next morning were many miles on their way.

The next time they encamped, it was in a field, on the outskirts of a little town, where, as Polly informed Minnie, they were to perform in about a week or so.

During the week which intervened between the encampment and the performance, Minnie was taught to walk upon stilts by the gipsy woman and little Polly, who was quite an adept at the art, and who gave Minnie many valuable hints on balancing herself properly, and other important points in stilt-walking, and which were of such great assistance to her that, at the expiration of the time allotted, she had become quite proficient.

The performance, which took place every day, consisted of all the latest juggling feats, to melodies on the Pan-pipes, with a rather heavy drum accompaniment; dancing, and stilt-walking.

To Minnie this acting was worse than any of the other hardships she had to endure; and no amount of blows could induce her to carry round the tambourine, which office therefore fell to Polly's lot.

While Minnie was thus being carried from place

to place, made to beg, and even taught to steal, what were her friends doing?

When the nurse awoke, and did not see her little charge anywhere in sight, she jumped up in great haste, and began looking about the forest for her; but when the sun went down, and no Minnie appeared, she was in a panic of alarm. She rushed frantically about from place to place, searching behind bushes and trees, with a lingering hope that the child might be in hiding; and it was not till it began to grow so dark that to stay any longer was time lost, that she left the forest and turned her footsteps homewards.

When, after arriving there, she had told her sad news, the utmost consternation prevailed. Mr. and Mrs. Langdon were so overwhelmed with apprehension, that the nurse's carelessness remained unreprieved; and the poor woman's agony at perceiving the sorrow she had occasioned was so great, that a sharp rebuke would have been a relief.

In a very short time, a number of men had been collected, and provided with lanterns; and headed by Mr. Langdon himself, they set out in search of the child. Arrived at the wood, they scattered, appointing a meeting-place at the other end of it; but their efforts, like those of the nurse, were without result. Mr. Langdon, before leaving the wood, made inquiries concerning the gipsies, a party of whom he knew to have been for some time stationed there; but learning that they had left the day before, he at once gave up all hope in that quarter.

After looking up every nook and corner in the village, Mr. Langdon, having sent messengers in every direction, weary and dispirited, returned home, in order to prepare a description to send to the constabulary. Here fresh trouble awaited him. Mrs. Langdon, who at the best of times had delicate health, had sunk under the terrible blow, and was now very ill. Mr. Langdon endeavoured to soften the tidings of his failure, by telling her of his plan of sending a description to all the town-criers in the kingdom, which he said could not fail to find their lost little one.

But though large rewards were offered, and a minute description given, yet, so far, they had been unsuccessful; and, indeed, had any one passed her by, he would hardly have recognised in the little brown gipsy-child—for the woman had stained her skin and hair with a preparation she always kept by her—or the gaudily-dressed street-performer, the child of the wealthy Mr. Langdon.

As day by day passed, and no news could be obtained of her child, Mrs. Langdon's illness so rapidly increased as to seriously frighten her husband, who determined to call in the family doctor instead of the village apothecary, who was now attending her, and in order to prevent delay, for he lived at a great distance, resolved to be his own messenger.

At the time of which we write, the post was very slow, and, also, not very certain.

After a journey of two days, Mr. Langdon arrived at the town where the doctor lived. As he was

passing through one of the streets, his attention was attracted by a crowd of people, and by sundry exclamations, such as, "Poor child! Why, she's fainted! Don't she sham well?" and many others in the same strain.

Moved by a feeling of compassion, which was heightened by his own troubles, he made his way through the crowd to where a little child was lying, surrounded by several persons who were decked out as acrobats, and to whom the child, judging by her dress, evidently belonged.

Her friends seemed very unwilling for Mr. Langdon to interfere, but, without noticing their compunction, he lifted her in his arms, and—could it really be?—in the little cold form which he embraced, he recognised his lost darling.

Turning abruptly towards the man and woman, who appeared the leaders of the party, he demanded of them when, where, and how they had obtained the child; and they, seeing the turn affairs had taken, began a long tale of their having found her, and claimed the reward that had been offered—although they had detained her, hoping the amount might be increased—all which Mr. Langdon cut short by giving them in charge to a constable, who at that moment came up to know what the "row" was.

The physic which Mr. Langdon carried home with him, in the shape of his little Minnie, worked a marvellous cure in her mamma. As to Minnie herself, she soon recovered her strength under the different treatment she received at home; and though she had meant to "serve her nurse out," at the same time she received a lesson which she did not easily forget.

L. M. C.

ANSWER TO SCRIPTURE ACROSTIC ON PAGE 704

"CAIN. ABEL"—Gen. iv. 1, 8, 14; Heb. xi. 4.

1. C an A John ii. 11.
2. A biB Exod. xiii. 4.
3. I sraeliE
4. N abaL 1 Sam. xxv. 3.

SCRIPTURE ENIGMA.

1. Who Jeremiah to the princes brought?
2. Whom God and Rimmon both to worship sought?
3. Whose son was over those who tilled the land?
4. What wandering race to drink no wine were found?
5. The town where Solomon a navy made.
6. A king whose call five other kings obeyed.
7. What Syrian captain fell with all his host?
8. Who brought to Hezekiah Rabshakeh's boast?
9. Where dwelt the priest, father of Joseph's wife?
10. What priest to Egypt fled to save his life?
11. The place where David took a golden crown.
12. To whom was Paul, with care, by night brought down?
13. Who in his exile help to David brought?
14. What giant fain would have with David fought?
15. The land where Jephthah from his brethren fled.
16. Who angered Asa by the words he said?

We ask not worldly fame or wealth,
No earthly vain reward;
This one petition we present,
"Increase our faith," O Lord!